THE VENTILATION OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

We have received a letter from Mr. Jeakes in reply to Dr. Reid's communication, urging that whatever he *did* say to which Dr. R. objects had been previously said by Lord Seymour. We can find room for only part of it.

"The statements, that 'every written' requisition of Dr. Reid's had been complied with, and that 'the amount expended was upwards of 57,000*l.*' were not mine, but Lord Seymour's, as reported in the *Times* of Feb. 12.

I *repeat* my statement, that a portion of the drains were put in by his own men, from his own drawings, and the directions on those drawings prove that he was aware of passing hot water through them. Of the effect of which in causing offensive odours I am guilty of asking your readers to judge for themselves.

I also stated, and *repeat* that Dr. Reid had omitted to mention the failure and removal of a steam-engine, which he had erected for propelling the air through the House; and I then again left your readers to judge of the probable influence this had towards the failure of the ventilation. Dr. Reid's statement that 'arrangements were made under the authority of Lord Seymour for working the instrument, which was to have been driven by the engine,' is merely an ingenious way of telling you, that he was allowed to employ a certain number of men, to drive very imperfectly, and unequally, that which the engine ought to have performed properly.

I have now answered all the objections taken by Dr. Reid, to my statement, and I will conclude the correspondence by asking your practical readers, whether the whole of the details complained of by Dr. Reid are not trifling matters, and wholly insufficient to account (even if all were true) for the uncertain and unsatisfactory state of the ventilation of the new House of Commons?

The whole question will, I trust, in a few days, be set at rest, and beyond controversy, by Mr. Goldsworthy Gurney, who has been called in to make a report on the subject, and from whose experience and practical knowledge in these matters, much is to be expected. W. Jeakes."

ARCHITECTURAL GUIDE-BOOKS, WITH A TICKLISH ET CÆTERA.

As connected with the subject of my last communication, I now proceed to say something concerning a class of publications which certainly might do much for architectural illustration, literary as well as graphic, yet are generally, or rather almost invariably, executed with such disgraceful slovenliness as to be little less than actually repulsive—certainly contemptible. I allude to what style themselves "Guide-books," and show themselves not only very blind and stupid guides, but particularly ugly ones also, they being of exceedingly scarecrow physiognomy, and the veriest ragamuffins of literature. Those of Italy—the native home of art and taste—are, most strange to say, almost the vilest of any as regards what, though meant for graphic illustrations, might more properly be called graphic *abomination*, and hideous caricature. They are, moreover, usually as dry as chaff—most meagre with respect to description, and puling and feeble, if not utterly inane also, with respect to what is meant for critical remark, but which, when it does occur, answers to the character given by the *Edinburgh Review* of the literary style of a late eminent English connoisseur and leader of *ton* in art, viz. that of being "bombastic, pedantic, and trashy!"

The most barefaced and vulgar claptrap, the most contemptible Jemmy-Jessamy simpering, together with blundering that bespeaks, if not consummate ignorance, consummate intrepidity, seem to belong to the very constitution of guide-books, or such as are of a similar class, however they may happen to be named. That such should be the case is, even if otherwise of no importance, truly mortifying to those who have the interest of architecture at heart, inasmuch as it plainly shows the ignorance and consequent indifference of the public with regard to it to be such that either any stuff may be uttered, or remark suppressed altogether when buildings are to be spoken of. The plain though unpleasing truth is, that, magnificently as it is estimated by its own immediate followers, architecture holds with the public only the brevet rank of a fine art, without any hold on their sympathies.

Their eyesight is far better than their insight into it: like Beatrice, they "can see a church by daylight," and that contents them. So little, in fact, is the interest which the public take in architecture at present, that it is not worth while for newspapers to bestow upon it the same attention as they do on the other fine arts, on whose productions they occasionally descant at considerable length. I do not say that newspapers never speak of buildings, but when they do so it is only as buildings, and as to mere matter-of-fact particulars, without attempting to enter into any critical discussion respecting their artistic merits or deficiencies. It will, perhaps, be said that in so doing newspaper critics show their discretion by abstaining from betraying their ignorance. Be it so: the question then is, wherefore do they remain in ignorance? And the reply is, simply because they do not feel it worth their while to encounter the trouble of removing it, and to qualify themselves for expatiating plausibly and glibly, if not profoundly, on architectural topics. For such criticism there is no demand, consequently no supply.

Very possibly architects themselves may be satisfied with a state of things which wards off from them criticism altogether, both genuine and quack. In itself such security may be enviable, yet dearly is it paid for, as not only the art itself, but the profession also (not individually, but as a body), suffer in consequence, since it is only by being ignored that they escape the surveillance of criticism,

"Bitter to boobies, wholesome in the main."

Whatever it may be to others, to me it is very strange, that those who are so clear-sighted in other respects, and can even see the invisible curves of the Parthenon, cannot see all this, and a very great deal more which I here pass over, for I have wandered so far from the point at which I first set out, that instead of attempting to return to it, I will now make my retreat at once, with fading colours if not with flying ones, and sign myself

Your incorrigible, Q.

THE PROVIDENT INSTITUTION OF BUILDERS' FOREMEN.

The fifth anniversary dinner of members and friends of this useful Institution was held at the London Tavern, on Wednesday, the 24th inst.; Mr. Thomas Piper, in the chair.

Amongst the supporters of the Institution present were Messrs. Kendal, G. Baker, H. Lee, W. Piper, T. W. Piper, W. Dunnege, J. Jay, S. Pocock, G. Wales, J. Wilson, G. M'Lenan, H. W. Cooper, Jas. Bird, G. Bird, Jer. Pilcher, W. Freeman, &c.

The dinner dispensed with, and the duties of loyalty discharged,

The Chairman proposed "The Institution of Builders' Foremen, and may it prosper;" and in doing so said he was requested to offer at that meeting the allegiance, accompanied by a substantial proof of the kind expression of good will of Mr. Hosking (the official referee), Mr. Hardwick, and his (the chairman's) own father. He was greatly pleased to meet so many gentlemen on that occasion for such a purpose as that for which they had assembled, for much as the word "combination" had of late acquired ill fame, this was a kind of combination which all ought to encourage: it was associating to guard against the risks and casualties to which our common nature is subject. In doing so they were running no risk, but were taking advantage of that information which our social condition gives us the opportunity of acquiring. Associated as we are in large communities, there must of necessity be a certain amount of casualty to some individuals, and the application of the correct statistics which had been obtained, in reference to the objects of this institution, enabled its founders and supporters to maintain it on a firm basis. The grand common law, which controlled all existences, was illustrated in the lives of all our fellow creatures; sickness was one of the casualties of existence, but its proportion, in numbers of individuals, could, according to certain known laws, be ascertained and correctly calculated. Death, to an individual, was a casualty, but taking the statistics of the land, and noting the laws which govern all such casualties, we were enabled to calculate our individual longevity by our comparative longevity, and by thus throwing the risk over a large circle, we were enabled to provide for those most dear to us, and for whose welfare we were always most anxious. The great question of the day, and which was agitated from hour to hour, was the question as to the rights of labour and the rights of capital. He wished to avoid introducing any topic to vex their feelings, but he did it to observe that they, the foremen—the middlemen—were the lookers-on on both sides, and when strifes arose between the employed and their employers it was for them to judge and see how difficult it was to draw the line, and say where the rights of one should end, and where the rights of another should begin. They themselves, who had to superintend large numbers of people, had to perform duties to the men under them, as well as to their own employers; and through all the gradations of life the duties of men were so interwoven that they could not be separated: it was trifling for any men to talk about their rights, for no one class could assert its rights without almost of necessity trenching upon the rights of another. History told us that the strifes which had rent nations to pieces arose from the attempts to build up impossible barriers between classes. The former, from their position, had a mission to perform between the employers and the employed, to make them both understand their relation one to the other; and in the due discharge of that duty depended the prosperity of this great country. To turn their association together into a means of offence upwards or downwards, would be to destroy all individual happiness, and it would be like erecting a building into which the rays of the sun could never enter. It was the duty of all to look one another in the face and feel, each in his position, and according to the extent of his means, able to assist one another in their passage through this world. It was by such an institution as this, in providing against the contingencies and uncertainties of life they were inculcating habits of providence, and promoting good will amongst all classes, and thereby each one best serving himself, and securing his own happiness.

The next toast was—"The Architects and Civil Engineers of the Metropolis," which

Mr. Kendal acknowledged, and said it was the wish and desire of the architects to support the Institution by every means in their power, and he acknowledged the great services he had received in a long career from the builders' foremen.

The next toast, "The Master Builders of the Metropolis," was acknowledged by Mr. Lee; and this was followed by "The health of the Governor."

Mr. George Baker responded to the toast, and said that when he was invited to accept the office he felt it was the greatest honour that could be conferred upon him, because he was asked to preside over a body of men with whom he had been intimately associated in matters of business all his life, and although he had now retired from business he should still feel it one of the most cheerful duties of his life to promote their interest and welfare in every possible way that he could, because there was no class of men to whom he owed a greater obligation than the class of men for whose welfare this institution was founded.

Various other toasts were given, and at the conclusion the chairman announced that the donations in the room amounted to 295*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* and the annual subscriptions 21*l.* 11*s.*

Cambridge Architectural Society.—At the third meeting for the Lent Term, held on Thursday last, Mr. E. Freshfield, Trinity College, read a paper on Illuminations, illustrated by copies from mediæval illuminated manuscripts.

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